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18 June 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : Proposal to Accelerate the Analytical Effort on Communist Chinese Ground Forces

REFERENCE : NIE 13-3-70, "Communist China's General Purpose and Air Defense Forces"

1. For the first time in a number of years NIE 13-3 says something different. It questions a number of generalizations about the Chinese ground forces which have been repeated in past years to the point of becoming "conventional wisdom" and it makes a pioneering attempt to take some measure of the impact of political aberrations, such as the Cultural Revolution, upon the capabilities of the armed forces. It also raises the level of uncertainty on the size of the ground forces to plus or minus 15 percent.

2. These and other changes from what was becoming a stereotype NIE reflect the impact of recent OSR memorandums, particularly the Shen-yang study published in March this year. This study indicates that Chinese armies and divisions deviate much more widely from the estimated TO&E than had been assumed. This study and other OSR work based largely on photographic analysis also bring into serious question much of DIA's current Order of Battle on China, particularly below the divisional level. In fact, DIA is now scrambling to revise its Order of Battle methodology to make it truly all-source instead of basing it almost wholly on

3. In exposing some of the generalizations and assumptions of the past, we have done only the easier part of the job. What is needed now is to build up a new and sounder picture of the Chinese conventional forces by extending the Shen-yang methodology to a much broader sample of the country. The study of one

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military region was sufficient to challenge existing generalizations, but we cannot extrapolate from one region a set of new generalizations of nationwide validity.

4. Within the next two years or so, several additional military regions in China should be given the same sort of intensive, all-source analysis we have done on Shen-yang. As a step in this direction we have scheduled a paper on the Kun-ming Military Region for the end of fiscal year 1971 (which may be an optimistic deadline). We find that the production of this study will use all the photo interpreter support presently assigned to work on Chinese ground forces. This means that we are limited to covering one military region at a time, and, at one to two years per study, this approach would take up to eight years to cover 4 regions. During this time numerous changes would have taken place in the Chinese armed forces, including the movement of armies from one region to another. The latest study would not be sufficiently comparable to the earliest, and the purpose of getting a parallel sample of the forces from several regions at roughly the same time would be defeated.

5. DIA is now appreciative of the need for intensive, all-source work on this subject and eager to participate, but I do not think we can count on them to play a major role. The chronic turnover of personnel which plagues DIA--along with the tendency to divert research personnel to various crash projects--critically reduces the possibility of their developing and maintaining the sustained expertise needed for the job. The DIA China Branch announced at the NIE coordinating sessions that it has done preliminary studies on the Peking and Nanking Military Regions, which it does not plan to publish. We are skeptical of the quality of these hastily done studies, but we will encourage DIA to make further, more intensive efforts in this direction.

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8. The end result may not be drastically different from what we are saying now. Or there may be some highly important differences. In any case, the DCI would be able to speak with a new level of confidence about the armed forces of Communist China.

9. To do this, OSR is prepared to divert a number of analysts from other projects--projects which we consider important but not as imperative. But the analysts can do little without adequate PI support. I propose to confer with the Director of IAS and the Executive-Director of NPIC in an effort to secure sufficient PI manpower to support the research on the China ground forces. This could in turn impact on the work they are doing for other components. If it comes to that, we may have to come to you for guidance on overall priorities.

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Director
Strategic Research

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